

## **Northfield Middle High School Teacher Named 2014 Vermont Teacher of the Year**

**Northfield, VT** – Luke Foley, an Alternative Program teacher at Northfield Middle High School in Northfield, was named by Education Secretary Armando Vilaseca and State Board of Education (SBE) Chair Stephan Morse as the 2014 Vermont Teacher of the Year (VT-TOY). The announcement was made at the beginning of the SBE meeting which was held at the school today.

Also honored were:

- Alternate **Katy Farber**, a 6<sup>th</sup> grade teacher at Rumney Memorial School in Middlesex
- Finalist **Valerie Gasco**, a Special Educator at Riverside Middle School in Springfield

“This year’s Teacher of the Year exemplifies many of the practices that we are trying to incorporate into our schools,” said Secretary Vilaseca. “Alternative programs model what we want to provide for our students, such as flexible schedules, applied and hands-on learning, and internships.”

As the 2014 Teacher of the Year, Foley will travel statewide visiting schools and working with teachers. In addition, he is Vermont’s candidate for the National Teacher of the Year award, sponsored by the Council of Chief State School Officers. Foley will travel to Washington, D.C. this spring for a reception at the White House, where he will meet the President.

“I am very honored and humbled to join such a distinguished group of educators and to represent Vermont as this year’s Teacher of the Year,” said Foley. “I’m incredibly excited for the opportunity to continue sharing the work that my students, colleagues and I have been doing. The way in which we are approaching education - using real-world problems to develop critical academic skills, while also servicing our school and community - is an innovative and creative design that challenges every student to hone their skills, cultivate their passions, and find meaningful ways to contribute to the world around them.”

Luke Foley, a resident of Warren, is in his third year with the STAR Program at Northfield Middle High School. Foley has a unique educational background, having worked as a wilderness guide, field instructor, and program director for several schools and programs in Vermont, the western United States, and around the world. He also spent time in the classroom as a social studies teacher at Montpelier High School prior to his current position with Northfield's alternative program.

Foley received his Masters in the Arts of Teaching from the University of Vermont and has a B.A. in International Political Economy from Colorado College. He is currently engaged in a fellowship with the National Park Service and Shelburne Farms called A Forest for Every Classroom. Additionally, Foley is actively involved with VT FEED (Food Education Every Day), the Center for Sustainable Systems, and Shelburne Farms' Sustainability Institute.

“Luke truly represents the direction that our Vermont public schools are heading,” said Washington South Superintendent Laurie Gossens. “With the focus on personal learning plans,

experiential learning and flexible pathways, Luke not only offers his students the academic skills they will need to be successful in life but also builds on their sense of character and what they as individuals can contribute to society as a whole.”

The assembly included remarks by Foley, Farber, Gasco, Secretary Vilaseca, Chair Morse, NMHS Principal Parkman, and WSSU Superintendent Gossens.

“Luke embodies what every educator should strive to be,” said Northfield Middle High School Principal Ryan Parkman. “He is a caring person who not only facilitates the acquisition of knowledge by our youth, but also has a genuine interest in the well-being of the students and fosters their moral and ethical development.”

Also in attendance were previous Vermont Teachers of the Year (VT-TOY), Jay Hoffman, 2014 VT-TOY; Karen Heath, 2005 VT-TOY; Janet Steward, 2002 VT-TOY; Carol Smith, 1995 VT-TOY; Tom Sabo, 2009 VT Milken Educator; and Peter Evans, YATST/UP for Learning.

“There was much diversity in the candidate pool this year,” said Chair Morse. “The variety of teachers who were nominated by their peers speaks to the strength and breadth of Vermont’s teaching force as well as the continued focus on providing opportunities for all kids to succeed.”

Katy Farber, a resident of Middlesex, is in her twelfth year with Rumney Memorial School. “I’m honored to be in this group of thoughtful, passionate, and innovative educators,” said Farber. “I know there are thousands of teachers across the great state of Vermont making a difference in the lives of children.”

Valerie Gasco, a resident of Springfield, is in her nineteenth year with Riverside Middle School. “Participating in the selection process for Vermont Teacher of the Year gave me the chance to publicly celebrate the wonderful things being done every day in my school, my district, and the community of Springfield,” said Gasco. “It’s an honor to have been asked to represent them, and to have had the opportunity to deeply reflect about what it means to me to be a teacher.”

Foley will be presented with SMART Board™ equipment and software for his classroom by New England SMART Technologies, software will also go to the two finalists.

For more than 50 years our nation has honored teachers with the [National Teacher of the Year Program](#). Since 1964, Vermont has participated in this program recognizing outstanding teachers. View Vermont’s award history here: <http://bit.ly/18pLbep>.

For more information about the Vermont Teacher of the Year program, go to: <http://education.vermont.gov/new/html/dept/awards/toy.html>.

For more information about the State Board of Education, go to: <http://education.vermont.gov/new/html/mainboard.html>

###